

All last year, liberal politicians and activists made absurd and false claims about law enforcement. Here are some of them: "We need to completely dismantle" local police. Here is another one: "Policing in our country is inherently and intentionally racist."

A leftwing messaging campaign has spent a year and a half trying to chill law enforcement and policing. A network of liberal district attorneys around the country is matching their rhetoric with incredibly soft-on-crime practices behind the scenes, and the predictable result of all this has been a collapse—a collapse—in public safety.

For example, last month a man killed six people and injured dozens more at a Christmas market in Wisconsin—listen to this—just weeks after he was released on bail for another set of violent charges. This criminal had already been arrested and locked up in neighboring Milwaukee County, but he was let out by a liberal DA who remarked several years ago:

Is there going to be an individual I divert, or I put into treatment program, who's going to go out and kill somebody? You bet. Guaranteed. It's guaranteed to happen. It does not invalidate the overall approach.

Stunning. There are now a whole bunch of grieving families in this Wisconsin city who have strong feelings about that "approach."

Here is a headline from New York City just this week:

Man busted for assault set free, allegedly beats two random [New York City] women—then cut loose again.

Smash-and-grabs, flash mob thefts, and carjackings are increasingly facts of life in multiple major cities, but against this backdrop, Democrats just want to keep getting weaker on crime and softer on public safety.

We expect a vote today on the nomination of Rachael Rollins to be U.S. attorney for Massachusetts. Ms. Rollins has spent years in her current job as a DA pushing the idea that the State should wipe entire categories of crimes off the list of things worth prosecuting. She would rather her office not go after trespassers, shoplifters, or even those found possessing drugs with intent to distribute. This soft-on-crime advocacy should have earned the nominee a pink slip. Instead, President Biden is giving her a promotion.

I would urge all Senators to vote no. Law-abiding Americans don't want prosecutors who refuse to prosecute. They don't want city jails equipped with revolving doors. And they need leaders who will defend the rule of law.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today, as I have done too many times before and as my colleague Senator MURPHY did just last week, to reiterate what people across my home State and the entire country have been calling for for years now, calling for us to take

action here in the Senate to end the crisis of gun violence that we are seeing in our schools, in our neighborhoods, and across our country.

Last week, we mourned the deaths of four high school students following the tragic shooting at Oxford High School in Michigan. My heart goes out to those four students' families and friends, and my heart goes out to every student at Oxford High who is now carrying the trauma of that experience.

My heart breaks for every student in this country who grows up thinking something like this will eventually happen to them at their school, and my heart hurts for every parent who worries every time they send their kid off to school because—let's face it—school shootings are a very real threat in this country.

As a parent and a grandparent and a former preschool teacher, I know school is supposed to be a place where our children feel safe, where they can go to learn and grow and see friends, where they can be kids, but after weeks like last week, that feeling disappears, following school shootings like the one we saw in Michigan or threats to schools like we saw last week in my home State of Washington.

Just last week, my hometown high school, Bothell High School, was shut down over concerns about a threat of violence. Ferndale High School was in lockdown Wednesday because of a threat of a gun on campus. That same Wednesday, the day after the shooting in Michigan, threats were made targeting three schools in Mukilteo School District, forcing local law enforcement to mobilize resources and personnel—all of that in just 1 week.

While, luckily, none of those threats we saw in my home State escalated any further thanks in large part to the quick work of local officials, in the same week, Seattle saw six shootings in just over 24 hours. From January through October of this year, Seattle has already seen more than 500 shooting incidents. It is already the most shootings the city has seen in the last decade.

I am not the only one who thinks this cannot continue. I know because for years I have heard from students and teachers and parents from my State who want major Federal action to finally end the gun violence epidemic in this country. People want an end to these school shootings, an end to shootings at our churches and places of worship, an end to the shootings at our malls and stores, and an end to the gun violence that doesn't always make the news but happens on our streets and in our neighborhoods.

As Senator MURPHY said last week, we are the only high-income nation in the world where this happens. But it happens because we let it happen because, despite how many times my Democratic colleagues and I have come to the floor with commonsense, popular legislation to help prevent gun violence, our Republican colleagues

block us from even debating those bills, let alone voting on them. Think about that. They won't even allow a debate on this legislation that could save lives.

So I ask them: How many times are we going to go through this cycle? What will you tell parents in this country when they ask you what you did to stop the next school shooting? How many times will you refuse to even debate commonsense steps to keep our communities safe?

It is past time Republicans either get on board with taking action to stop these shootings or at least get out of the way. Like so many parents or grandparents, I want to stop worrying if our kids are safe in school. And like so many Americans, I am done with my Republican colleagues blocking commonsense gun laws at every turn.

At this point, you are either in favor of taking action to help put an end to these shootings or you are against them.

Washington can and should continue to build on its gun safety laws. The administration can and should continue to invest in community violence intervention programs. But here is the deal: We can't address the full scope of the gun violence epidemic in this country without taking major Federal action. Universal background checks, an assault weapons ban, and a patchwork of gun safety laws are simply not adequate. We need Federal laws in place in order to protect our families.

The fact that one party has listened to the voices of parents across the country and taken to the floor once again to call for an end to gun violence while the other listens to the gun lobby and stays silent in the face of repeated tragedy speaks volumes. Simply put, our kids and grandkids deserve to be safe from gun violence in their schools and on our streets.

I refuse to let Republican obstruction continue to get in the way of commonsense measures that will save lives. All options need to be on the table. It is time we restore the Senate to make sure this institution can actually serve the interests of the vast majority of the American public.

So I promise all parents, all the grandparents, everyone in Washington State that, despite the obstruction and silence from my Republican colleagues, I will not stay quiet, and I will keep pushing for change. And I hope the American people will do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, Americans are currently dealing with the worst inflation in more than 30 years—high grocery prices, high rent prices, high gas prices, high car prices, increases in the price of household goods, and the list goes on. Inflation is so bad that it has outstripped wage growth,

resulting in a de facto pay cut for many Americans.

One of the price hikes hitting Americans hard is the increase in the price of gas. Gas prices have risen 40 percent since President Biden took office—40 percent. That takes a tremendous toll on family budgets. And, of course, high gas prices and other energy costs contribute to price increases on a whole host of other goods. Manufacturers facing higher transportation costs thanks to high gas prices, for example, are likely to pass on at least some of those increased costs to consumers in the form of price hikes.

In my home State of South Dakota, families are facing an increase in home heating costs as high as 50 to 100 percent, depending on how severe of a winter we face.

Nationwide, concerns over high heating costs this winter have been tempered by mild weather so far, but predictions of huge energy bills could return with a period of sustained harsh weather. And that would be another financial blow for families whose budgets are already severely stretched by our current inflation crisis.

It is easy for, say, a wealthy Democrat politician to dismiss the consequences of inflation, but for families living paycheck to paycheck, an increase in the grocery bill or heating costs or the cost of a tank of gas could mean tough decisions, like choosing between adequately heating the house or filling the car to get to a job.

So what has President Biden been doing to help alleviate rising energy prices and inflation? Well, the answer is not much. First, he pleaded with the OPEC cartel to increase oil production and increase global supply, which is the single most influential factor when it comes to gas prices. OPEC was unmoved.

Then the President recently announced the release of 50 million barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Oil Reserve, a move that Congress had, in part, already mandated.

Unfortunately, this is nothing more than a short-term relief measure, if that, as it will do little to give our energy sector the certainty it is seeking to bring production and American energy jobs back online.

While Democrats helped create the inflation crisis that we are experiencing by flooding the economy with unnecessary government money earlier this year, the President is not solely to blame for high energy prices, which have also been driven up by COVID-related issues. However, the President is certainly to blame for the hostile attitude his administration has displayed toward conventional energy production. And he is certainly to blame for the reckless tax-and-spending spree he is pushing, which would further drive up energy prices for American families.

The President made clear that his attitude toward conventional energy production on day 1 of his administration, when he canceled the Keystone XL

Pipeline, an environmentally responsible pipeline project that was already underway and that would have delivered more than 10,000 construction jobs and helped decrease energy costs by increasing regional energy supply, all while being offset with a \$1.7 billion investment in renewable energy.

The President also almost immediately banned new oil and gas leases on Federal lands, sending a clear signal to oil and gas producers that his administration would be reluctant to work with them to increase American energy production.

Then, of course, there was the release of the first outlines of the President's reckless tax-and-spending plan, which displayed a clear hostility to conventional energy.

Given this record, it is no surprise that many energy producers have been less than enthusiastic about coming fully back online as we emerge from the pandemic. The market signals to increase production are being muted by this administration's burdensome policies and clear intent of sidelining American energy development.

Then there is the current version of the reckless tax-and-spending spree, which Democrats are pushing to pass in the very near future. This legislation will not only likely worsen our current inflation situation, it will also make our energy less reliable and more expensive.

If Democrats succeed in passing their legislation, American families will have to brace themselves for even higher energy bills. One major driver of those higher energy bills will be the bill's new fee—or tax—on methane, which is targeted at crippling the natural gas sector that spurred America's recent energy renaissance and has actually been the largest driver of coal displacement.

The American Gas Association says the proposed fee could add as much as 34 percent to natural gas bills. And that is on top of any increases Americans may already be facing.

As I mentioned earlier, home heating bills are already projected to rise as much as 50 to 100 percent in my State this winter—and that is without the reckless tax-and-spending spree piling on.

And if progressive Democrats have their way, Democrats' tax-and-spending spree could also penalize our oil and gas sector by ending longstanding tax provisions like the percentage depletion deduction, which underpins an overwhelming number of independent producers representing roughly 90 percent of wells drilled in the United States.

Simply put, this administration wants to make it more expensive and more difficult to develop our abundant energy resources in favor of their preferred energy technologies and electric vehicles, with predictable consequences for Americans' pocketbooks.

And just a word about those electric vehicles. The President's Transpor-

tation Secretary recently suggested that families feeling the pinch of high gas prices could solve their problem by buying an electric vehicle, which would allow them to "never have to worry about gas prices again."

Well, I have news for the President's Transportation Secretary. A lot of Americans can't afford to replace their car with an electric vehicle, not to mention that electric cars and trucks are still not a practical option for many Americans for other reasons. Secretary Buttigieg's statement shows just how far out of touch Democrats have become with ordinary Americans.

I know Democrats are deeply invested in their Green New Deal fantasies of an instant, mostly electric energy regime. But the reality is that American consumers will need to use liquid fuels and electricity and heat for natural gas well into the future. And punishing or discouraging responsible energy development in oil and natural gas will do nothing—nothing—but drive up energy prices for consumers and force our Nation to rely more on oil and gas imports from unstable areas of the world.

We should be encouraging American energy development of every kind—from oil and natural gas to wind, solar, and biofuels—not artificially picking winners and losers and discouraging essential energy production.

And with American consumers struggling with long-term inflation, the last thing we need to be doing right now is passing legislation that will drive up energy prices. Unfortunately, if Democrats have their way and succeed in passing their tax-and-spending legislation, Americans will soon be able to add even higher energy bills to the list of challenges that they are currently facing.

So much for building back better for the American people.

ENERGY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, while I am on the topic of energy, I would like to briefly comment on yesterday's announcements from the EPA and USDA concerning biofuels. To put it simply, the administration can't have it both ways on the renewable fuel standard, something agriculture stakeholders in South Dakota know all too well.

Yesterday, the EPA announced a proposal to take the unprecedented step of clawing back previously set biofuel blending targets; 2020 volumes would be reduced by 2½ billion gallons, and 2021 would see a reduction.

Now, the EPA is trying to sell this by simultaneously proposing an increase in the 2022 blending volumes, which on its own would be favorable, but it is far from enough to make up for the lost gallons.

And keep in mind that the EPA's proposal pulls back blending obligations from a final rule, giving stakeholders little confidence that this promised 2022 increase won't meet the